



# **U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary**

## **F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman**

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### ***News Advisory***

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## **GAO Report Finds Improvements Needed to Enhance U.S.'s Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking**

WASHINGTON, D.C. –A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released today finds that the U.S. government's efforts to combat human trafficking need: (1) a coordinated strategy to combat trafficking in persons abroad; (2) established performance measures or conducted evaluations of U.S. programs to combat human trafficking in foreign countries; (3) improved estimates of the number of trafficking victims or better analysis of human trafficking-related data that already resides within government agencies; and (4) more narrative to explain why the specific "country tier rankings" were assigned.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-Wis.), who requested this GAO report along with House International Relations Committee Chairman Henry J. Hyde (R-Ill.), said, "I am deeply concerned about the stark deficiencies highlighted by this report. I believe the report clearly illustrates the need for the President to move the preparation of the estimate of victims out of the intelligence community and assign it instead to the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center (HSTC). The HSTC is a joint State, Homeland Security, and Justice Clearinghouse for all relevant human trafficking information, so it should be able to accurately estimate the scale of human trafficking. The HSTC can also assist in improving the reliability of the country tier rankings."

Chairman Hyde stated, "The exploitation, mostly of women and children, into the commercial sex industry and the trafficking of men, women, boys and girls into forced labor on farms, in factories and domestic servitude is an offense to the dignity of human life. The congressionally mandated Trafficking in Persons Report has increased global awareness and prompted more antitrafficking efforts. With each year Congress will, no doubt, expect to see ever increasing improvements in both data gathering and program efficiency."

Human trafficking occurs worldwide where people are bought, sold, and held in slave-like conditions. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) requires the federal government to promote international programs to ensure punishment of traffickers, to protect their victims, and to prevent trafficking.

The State Department publishes an annual Trafficking in Persons Report, which includes a ranking of countries into tiers based upon an assessment of foreign governments' compliance with the four minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking set by the TVPA. Three of the standards address whether the countries' laws prohibit severe forms of trafficking and proscribe penalties for trafficking crimes, while the fourth standard is applied to assess actual efforts by the respective government to enforce the laws and eliminate trafficking.

#### **WHAT GAO FOUND:**

- ✓ The GAO report, titled "Human Trafficking, Better Data, Strategy and Reporting Needed to Enhance U.S. Antitrafficking Efforts Abroad," recommends that the government improve information on trafficking, develop and implement a strategy which clarifies agencies' roles and responsibilities and establish a way to gauge results abroad, and clearly document the rationale and support for country rankings.
- ✓ The U.S. government needs a coordinated strategy to combat trafficking in persons abroad. The U. S. government must measure the performance of its programs to combat trafficking and, consequently, evaluate which programs are effective.
- ✓ The U.S. government's coordination mechanisms ought to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for federal or international agencies, identify needs, or leverage activities to achieve greater results.
- ✓ The State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report is intended to serve as a guide, but agencies managing overseas programs must use this diagnostic tool to identify and correct deficiencies. The report's country assessments must clearly explain how the Department of State assessed each country against antitrafficking standards. The absence of detailed explanations lessens the ability to bring about reform.
- ✓ The U.S. government estimates up to 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders annually, but because of deficiencies in analysis and data gaps, the GAO finds that estimate likely understates the extent of human trafficking.

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